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Thesis

AN EVALUATION OF THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TOPIC
ASSIGNMENT AND THE SITUATION ASSIGNMENT IN FIFTH AND
SIXTH GRADE COMPOSITION

Submitted by

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(B.S. in Ed., Salem Teachers College, 1935)

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Education

1948

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CHAPTER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS PAGE

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The writer is also indebted to Miss Catherine Fleming, Miss Lucy Hosker, and Miss Mary Wells, teachers in Lynn, for their help in carrying out this study.

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Assignment in fifth and sixth grade composition.

Composition assignments in the elementary grades have consisted largely of single topics or of short lists of topics from which to choose. In recent years, however, there has been a tendency to feel that children respond better when stimulated by a definite situation--real or imaginary--which requires a written response.

McKee¹ says, "...the schools should set up situations and activities quite similar to those met by children outside of school in order to confront them with stimuli that encourage the normal use of language. Such language-demanding activities can go far in making the program in composition more functional."

According to Littwin,² "It is the duty of the teacher

¹Paul McKee, Language in the Elementary School (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), p. 128.

²Maxwell P. Littwin, "An Experimental Investigation of the Effect of the Method of Presentation upon the Imaginative Quality of Descriptive Writing among Elementary School Pupils," The Journal of Experimental Education (September, 1935), 444.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the topic assignment and the situation assignment in fifth and sixth grade composition.

Composition assignments in the elementary grades have consisted largely of single topics or of short lists of topics from which to choose. In recent years, however, there has been a tendency to feel that children respond better when stimulated by a definite situation--real or imaginary--which requires a written response.

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¹Paul McKee, Language in the Elementary School (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), p. 168.

²Maxwell F. Littwin, "An Experimental Investigation of the Effect of the Method of Presentation upon the Imaginative Quality of Descriptive Writing among Elementary School Pupils," The Journal of Experimental Education (September, 1935), 4:48.

CHAPTER I

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tion more functional."

According to Little,² "It is the duty of the teacher

¹Paul Kossel, Language in the Elementary School (New

York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), p. 18.

²Maxwell R. Little, "An Experimental Investigation of
the Effect of the Method of Presentation upon the Imaginative
Quality of Descriptive Writing among Elementary School Chil-
dren," The Journal of Experimental Education, September,
1933, 143.

to create for pupils situations and help them to experiences from which imaginative expression may flow."

This study will present data in an attempt to answer the following questions concerning the relative merits of the topic assignment and the situation assignment:

1. Which assignment--the topic or the situation--will produce the greater fluency?
2. Which assignment--the topic or the situation--will produce the greater word enrichment?
3. Which assignment--the topic or the situation--will produce the greater number of ideas?

The data will be analyzed to answer the above questions in relation to the following aspects:

1. The performance of all the children.
2. The performance of the sixth grade children only.
3. The performance of the fifth grade children only.
4. The performance of the boys only.
5. The performance of the girls only.

Summary of Previous Research

Background.-- "For some time traditional notions regarding the aims and purposes of composition teaching have been coming in for persistent attack. Attention is being gradually diverted from the composition product, from the number and variety of formal and mechanical errors made by pupils to the character of the observation, imagination, and reflection shown by them." This change in emphasis of which Littwin¹ speaks, has resulted in the making of several critical studies of composition assignments.

Until fairly recently assignments in composition were not based upon those situations which in life call for written responses. Pupils were often asked to write on dull, vague, and abstract topics about which they neither knew nor cared. Meadows,² in 1928, concluded,

Probably in no way did the teaching of composition in the early history of our normal schools vary so much from the teaching of that subject in the present teachers colleges as in the assignment of theme subjects. The following lists, taken somewhat at random from early textbooks, should be sufficient proof of this statement.

Practically all the subjects are abstract as opposed to the more concrete and practical subjects of today.

¹Littwin, op. cit., p. 44.

²Leon R. Meadows, A Study of the Teaching of English Composition in Teachers Colleges in the United States, Contributions to Education, No. 311 (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1928), p. 12.

Submission to Teachers	Resignation under Affliction
Diversions	The Evils of Pride
Time	Politeness and Good Breeding
Modesty	A Pleasing Disposition
Flattery	History and Biography Compared
History	Novels
Dress	Contemplation
Parental Affection	Generosity
Good Manners	Politeness and Religion
A Good Character	The Art of Pleasing
Anger	

Gradually the importance of interest as a motivating force in learning came into prominence. Dewey¹ said, "If we can secure interest in a given set of facts or ideas, we may be perfectly sure that the pupil will direct his energies toward mastering them."

Leaders in the language field recognized the impetus which interest gave to writing. As early as 1917, Sheridan² felt that children preferred to write on the subjects about which they knew the most.

Driggs,³ in 1920, said, "Language lessons to have a challenging appeal for the youthful learner, must come within the circle of his interests. They must afford him opportunity to discuss living issues, to relate his worthwhile experiences, to express his natural thoughts and feelings. The themes for compositions must come within the compass of

¹John Dewey, Interest and Effort in Education (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913), p. 1.

²Bernard M. Sheridan, Speaking and Writing English (New York: Benjamin H. Sanborn Company, 1917), p. 9.

³Howard R. Driggs, Our Living Language (Chicago: University Publishing Company, 1920), p. 69.

his own youthful world."

McKee¹ claims that "...the teacher must arrange conditions so that the pupil talks or writes about only those things which he has experienced. Attempts to teach language by requiring or even encouraging the pupil to express ideas he does not have should be eliminated." He believes also that "It is probably safe to say that there can be no development of ability in written language, whenever the child writes on any unfamiliar topic."²

Studies of children's interests.-- As teachers have become more concerned with the content of compositions, studies have been made to determine what topics and situations are most interesting to pupils at different grade levels.

Very little has been done at the elementary school level to develop composition topics objectively. However, if it can be assumed that children like to write on the same subjects about which they enjoy talking, Zyve's³ investigation may prove helpful. She made a study of the subjects which were most successful in arousing spontaneous oral expression among third grade children. The topics which elicited the greatest amount of response were: home play, school work, animals, and trips.

¹McKee, op. cit., p. 70.

²Ibid., p. 321.

³Claire Zyve, "Conversation among Children," Teachers College Record (October, 1927), 29:46-61.

In an effort to discover the subjects on which junior high school pupils prefer to write, Smith¹ classified the compositions of 10,000 pupils in thirty junior high schools. The pupils chose their own topics, which were grouped under five interest headings. Following is a list of these interest classifications in the order of their importance, judged by the number of compositions written in each area: (1) personal experience, (2) imagination, (3) how to do or make things, (4) current events or community problems, (5) school expeditions and community enterprises.

In the same study teachers of grades seven, eight, and nine were asked to list five topics which they had used successfully in composition teaching. The findings of the teacher survey were consistent with those of the pupil survey, indicating that children are more likely to write successfully when assigned topics of interest to them.

Smith² warned, however, that real danger can result from dogmatic reliance upon interest questionnaires, since no one type of topic is equally appealing to all pupils.

Laidley's³ technique of discovering composition interests was based upon an examination of at least one issue

¹Dora V. Smith, "The Danger of Dogma Concerning Composition Content," English Journal (June, 1926), 15:414-425.

²Ibid., p. 417.

³Mary F. Laidley, "Composition Interests of Junior High School Pupils," English Journal (March, 1925), 14:201-209.

of forty-six junior high school magazines, published in various sections of the country. She classified each article under an interest heading, judging the relative importance of each interest by the frequency with which articles on it occurred. Her list of interests in the order of their importance follows: (1) general news (assemblies, lectures, musicales, plays, school parties, honor records, and contests), (2) verse, (3) jokes and personals, (4) club news, (5) stories (most were concerned with everyday life; a smaller number, with the fanciful and the historical), (6) the moralities, and (7) informational essays.

One of the most extensive studies in the field of composition interests was made by Coleman¹ in 1931. From a study of the research done in other fields of pupil interests, he prepared thirty-six categories of interests.

In his attempt to learn the topics on which pupils prefer to write Coleman used two methods.

1. Each pupil wrote a composition on a topic of his own choosing.
2. Once a week for three weeks, each pupil wrote a composition, using a title selected from a list presented to him. These lists had thirty-six titles, paralleling his thirty-six categories of interests.

¹J. H. Coleman, Written Composition Interests of Junior and Senior High School Pupils, Contributions to Education, No. 494 (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1931), 117 pp.

Both parts of the study were tabulated by grouping the titles used under the prepared interest categories. In part one, an additional classification was made for any title which did not fit into one of the thirty-six categories of interests.

Coleman¹ concluded that the following interests are common to both boys and girls of all secondary-school grades:

Travel	Sympathy
Adventure	Animals
Outdoor Activities	Home Life
Ethics	Pupil Employment
Athletics and Sports	Leisure Activities
Personal Experience	Current Events
Literature	Famous People
Humorous Anecdotes	Getting Rich
Vocations	

The findings of these investigations have furnished teachers with objective evidence of pupil interests. The studies clearly indicate, however, that although there are interests common to given groups, there is no complete agreement of likes and dislikes for any one subject. Variations exist between the sexes, within a sex, and among the different age groups within a grade. Therefore, in order to insure that a pupil writes on a topic within his own experience and interest, it is recommended that he be given a wide selection of topics from which to choose. The list of topics presented should be checked against some list of interests, known to be common to pupils at the particular

¹Ibid., p. 86.

grade level. Furthermore, it is recommended that a pupil who fails to find on the list a topic which appeals to him, be allowed to write on one of his own choosing. Possibly he has a current interest on which he would like to express himself.¹

The topic versus the situation assignment.-- The determining of interests common to pupils at different grade levels is but one step toward the improvement of composition teaching. Some educators feel that bare topics, even when based upon well-known interests, do not provide the necessary stimulation of ideas. "Problems or incidents in real life," claimed Nicholson,² "will not present themselves as categorically labelled entities, as suggested by the titles of topic assignments."

Seely³ said,

It is probably not too much to affirm that written composition has been employed more normally in other school work than it has in the English classes. Its purposes, materials, and forms have had clearer and more naturally interrelated and motivated uses elsewhere than in the very classes supposed to clarify and give them useful meaning. The boy has undoubtedly "written up" his experiments

¹Ibid., p. 85.

²George Nicholson, "An Experimental Evaluation of the Results Obtained by Two Types of Composition Assignments," Unpublished Master's Thesis (Boston: Boston University School of Education, 1939), p. 27.

³Howard F. Seely, On Teaching English (New York: American Book Company, 1933), p. 243.

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¹ Ibid., p. 55.

² George Nicholson, "An Experimental Evaluation of the Methods Outlined by Two Types of Composition Assignments," Unpublished Master's Thesis (Boston: Boston University School of Education, 1933), p. 27.

³ Howard F. Seely, On Teaching English (New York: American Book Company, 1933), p. 243.

in science, his readings in history, his excursions in the fine and industrial arts, and his language translations with a keener eye to requirements and proprieties than that with which he has prepared his various "themes" in composition. This has occurred not because of his composition training in English, but largely in spite of it. The situation has been more lifelike in these other types of work than in formal composition activities. Uses, needs, materials, and purposes have exerted their influences just as they do in life.

Dissatisfaction with the topic assignment has led to serious consideration of the situation assignment, which Nicholson¹ has defined as follows: "The situation assignment is given by presenting to the pupils the pertinent facts of an incident or a problem, a condition drawn from reality or from imagination--in short, any set of circumstances, factual or fanciful, which may be covered by the term 'situation.'"

If teaching is to prepare for life, it seems reasonable that a pupil's writing should be stimulated by those situations or problems which both now and in future years, will demand written responses of him. "One school of thought," Haskell² wrote, "has maintained that a child should not write until he feels a real need for doing so....This group has held that the need itself would provide sufficient impetus for the learner to acquire the necessary skills. But most

¹Nicholson, op. cit., p. 7.

²Jean Haskell, "Improving Written English thru Group Composition," The National Elementary Principal, Twentieth Yearbook (July, 1941), 20:343-344.

in science, his writings in history, his expressions in the fine and industrial arts, and his language translations with a keener eye to readability and precision than that with which he has prepared his various "theses" in composition. This has occurred not because of his composition training in English, but largely in spite of it. The situation has been more lifelike in these other types of work than in formal composition activities. Uses, needs, materials, and purposes have exerted their influences just as they do in life.

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¹Nicholson, op. cit., p. V.

²Stan Hassell, "Improving Written English This Group Composition," The National Elementary English Association Yearbook (July, 1941), 80:313-324.

teachers have found it difficult, if not impossible, to discover or provide enough real-life experiences so that the child can master the skills of writing and spelling through such experiences alone."

To supplement the real-life experiences which furnish the child with a need to write, the teacher may present to the pupils incidents of imaginative happenings similar to those which in actual life call for written responses. The situation assignment, like the topic assignment, can be based upon those interests known to be common to pupils of a specified group. The further recommendation has been made that pupils be given a choice of situation assignments.¹

Only through research can the relative merits of the topic assignment and the situation assignment be determined. Two studies have already been made in an effort to evaluate the relative effectiveness of these two types of assignments.

In 1939, Nicholson² made a study to evaluate the relative effectiveness of topic and situation assignments in tenth grade composition. He prepared two topic assignments and two situation assignments. Each pupil wrote two compositions, one from a topic assignment, and one from a situation

¹Martin W. Donovan, "An Experimental Evaluation of the Relative Effectiveness of Two Methods of Composition Assignments in Stimulating Ideas," Unpublished Master's Thesis (Boston: Boston University School of Education, 1947), p. 12.

²Nicholson, op. cit., 50 pp.

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tive effectiveness of topic and situation assignments in fifth grade composition. He prepared two topic assignments and two situation assignments. Each pupil wrote two compositions, one from a topic assignment, and one from a situation

¹Marjorie E. Donovan, "An Experimental Evaluation of the Relative Effectiveness of Two Methods of Composition Assignment in the Fifth Grade," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Southern Baptist University School of Education, 1937), p. 11.

²Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 30.

assignment. The author concluded that in every aspect of the study analyzed, the situation assignment produced a greater number of words and a greater number of ideas than the topic assignment did.

Nicholson's¹ findings, however, are perhaps not so significant as they appear to be, since his topic assignments did not parallel his situation assignments. As the pupils, therefore, wrote on different subjects, it is difficult to say whether the variation in response, which he found, was dependent upon type of assignment or upon subject.

To verify Nicholson's findings, Donovan,² in 1947, made a study to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the topic assignment and the situation assignment in stimulating ideas in ninth grade composition. He too prepared two topic and two situation assignments. Each pupil wrote one composition from a topic assignment and one composition from a situation assignment. Since Donovan's topic assignments were parallel to his situation assignments, every pupil wrote on the same two subjects.

Donovan³ concluded, "The situation assignment proved itself to be superior to the topic assignment for a majority

¹Ibid., pp. 24-25.

²Donovan, op. cit., 48 pp.

³Ibid., p. 46.

of the pupils measured against themselves in drawing forth a greater response in ideas."

The findings of Donovan's¹ study, however, were not so significant as those of Nicholson's² study. This may or may not have been because of the fact that Donovan's topic assignments and situations assignments, unlike Nicholson's, were parallel or based upon the same two subjects.

The need for further research to improve interest in written composition.--Studies have been made to determine children's preferences for various types of assignments. Lyons,³ in 1943, made a study of 300 sixth grade children's preferences for different types of reading assignments. The order of preference for the assignments evaluated was: (1) excursions, (2) no activity, (3) construction, (4) entertaining, (5) talking, and (6) writing.

In 1945, Stewart⁴ conducted a study in grades four, five, and six to learn children's preferences in types of assignments. Her findings showed that talking and writing were the most

¹Ibid., 48 pp.

²Nicholson, op. cit., 50 pp.

³Catherine Lyons, "An Evaluation of the Relative Appeal of Reading Assignments," Unpublished Master's Thesis (Boston: Boston University School of Education, 1943), p. 25.

⁴Dorothy H. Stewart, "Children's Preferences in Types of Assignments," Unpublished Master's Thesis (Boston: Boston University School of Education, 1945), 105 pp.

distasteful of the assignments tested. *following questions*

The results of these studies strongly indicate that much needs to be done to improve interest in writing. Some of the present lack of interest in written composition has been attributed to the fact that pupils have been asked to write on topics about which they had nothing to say. *a greater word*

Hitchcock¹ wrote, "One must have something to say before he can say it; subject matter outranks expression." *ideas?*

Anderson² voiced the same idea when she said, "The person who would express his thoughts must have thoughts to express... ideas develop with impressions."

Nicholson³ felt that the necessary ideas could be stimulated through the use of the situation assignment. He wrote, "Presentation of the situation gives the pupil definite ideas from which he makes his start in expression whereas the topic assignment may leave him floundering while seeking a point of departure."

Purpose of present study.---From this summary of research it is evident that the situation assignment has been recognized as a possible improvement over the more firmly entrenched topic assignment. The purpose of the present study will be to

¹Alfred M. Hitchcock, Bread Loaf Talks on Teaching Composition (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927), p. 4.

²Mary F. Anderson, "On Carrying Water in Sieves," English Journal (June, 1931), 20:474.

³Nicholson, op. cit., p. 8.

present data in an attempt to answer the following questions concerning the relative effectiveness of the topic assignment and the situation assignment in fifth and sixth grade composition:

1. Which type of assignment will produce greater fluency?
2. Which type of assignment will produce greater word enrichment?
3. Which type of assignment will produce more ideas?

assignments.

I. Which assignment--the topic or the situation--produced the greater number of words?

II. Which assignment--the topic or the situation--produced the greater word enrichment?

III. Which assignment--the topic or the situation--produced the greater number of ideas?

Selection of topics used.--Since it appeared desirable to give the children a choice of topic assignments, a questionnaire was prepared. In selecting the topics for the questionnaire it seemed important to include a wide range of interests within the experience of all the children. The following twenty-five classifications of composition interests were selected at random from Coleman's list of thirty-six categories

John H. Coleman, Written Composition Interests of Junior and Senior High School Pupils (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1931), pp. 22-23.

CHAPTER II

CONSTRUCTION OF MATERIALS

Purpose.--The purpose of this study was to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the topic assignment and the situation assignment in fifth and sixth grade composition.

Three criteria were used to judge the two types of assignments.

- I. Which assignment--the topic or the situation--produced the greater number of words?
- II. Which assignment--the topic or the situation--produced the greater word enrichment?
- III. Which assignment--the topic or the situation--produced the greater number of ideas?

Selection of topics used.--Since it appeared desirable to give the children a choice of topic assignments, a questionnaire was prepared. In selecting the topics for the questionnaire it seemed important to include a wide range of interests within the experience of all the children. The following twenty-five classifications of composition interests were selected at random from Coleman's list of thirty-six categories

¹ John H. Coleman, Written Composition Interests of Junior and Senior High School Pupils (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1931), pp. 89-98.

of interests:

1. Vocations
2. Adventure
3. Animals
4. Athletics
5. Civics
6. Contemporary Famous People
7. Getting Rich
8. Health
9. Home Life
10. Humor
11. Indefinite Title
12. Literature
13. Music
14. Outdoor Activity
15. Personal Experience
16. Pupil Employment
17. School
18. Social Problems
19. Travel
20. Winning Prizes
21. Ethics
22. Handwork
23. Children
24. People
25. Science

It was then necessary to find a topic to parallel each of the classifications chosen. Many textbooks, courses of study, and teachers of composition were consulted before the final list of topics was completed.

Following is a classified list of the topics included in the questionnaire.

1. What I Want to Be	Vocations
2. Caught in a Storm ¹ ₂	Adventure
3. Animals Need Care	Animals
4. Why Every Boy and Girl Should Learn to Swim	Athletics
5. The Value of Playgrounds	Civics
6. The President of the United States	Contemporary Famous People
7. If I Were Rich	Getting Rich
8. How to Prevent Colds	Health
9. Leaving a Note for Mother	Home Life
10. The Funniest Story I've Ever Heard	Humor
11. Monkey Business!	Indefinite Title
12. A Wonderful Book	Literature
13. My Favorite Song and Why I Like It	Music
14. Fun at the Beach	Outdoor Activity
15. Waiting for the Mail	Personal Experience
16. How to Earn Money	Pupil Employment
17. What I Like about the ____ School	School

18. Why We Give to the Community Fund	Social Problems
19. A Trip I'd Like to Take	Travel
20. Winning a Prize	Winning Prizes
21. It Pays to Be Honest	Ethics
22. Making a Snow Man	Handwork
23. When I Was Very Young	Children
24. My Neighbors	People
25. Weather Forecasting	Science

To neutralize the effect which its position on the list might have upon a topic, the list of topics was prepared in four different sequences. These lists may be found in the Appendix.

Before the lists were distributed, they were arranged in rotation so that five papers had to be passed out before one was duplicated.

The lists were then presented to the children who were to take part in the experiment. The children were asked to write L before the topics on which they would like to write and D before the topics on which they would dislike to write. In order that the children might feel free to express their preferences they were asked not to write their names on the questionnaires. To insure careful reading of the topics, however, the children were told that their highest choices would determine future assignments.

The results of the questionnaire were tabulated. It was decided to use the six highest preferences as the topic assignments for this study. The following are the topics which were used:

1. What I Want to Be
2. A Trip I'd Like to Take
3. Fun at the Beach
4. How to Earn Money
5. What I Like about the _____ School
6. If I Were Rich

Table I shows the rank order of preference which the children made for each topic.

Table I. Rank Order of Preference for Topics.

Topic	Number Who Indicated Preference
1. What I Want to Be.....	110
2. A Trip I'd Like to Take.....	107
3. Fun at the Beach.....	103
4. How to Earn Money.....	96
5. What I Like about the _____ School.....	95
6. If I Were Rich.....	91
7. It Pays to Be Honest.....	89
8. Animals Need Care.....	84
9.5 Why Every Boy and Girl Should Learn to Swim.....	83

The results of the questionnaires were tabulated. It was decided to use the six highest preferences as the topics for this study. The following are the topics which were used:

1. What I want to be
2. A trip I'd like to take
3. Fun at the beach
4. How to earn money
5. What I like about the school
6. If I were rich

Table 1 shows the rank order of preference which the children made for each topic.

Table 1. Rank Order of Preference for Topics

Rank order of preference	Topic
110	1. What I want to be
107	2. A trip I'd like to take
103	3. Fun at the beach
98	4. How to earn money
93	5. What I like about the school
91	6. If I were rich
89	7. It pays to be honest
84	8. Children's Good Game
83	9. Why every boy and girl should learn to read

Table I. (concluded)

Topic	Number Who Indicated Preference
9.5 The Funniest Story I've Ever Heard.....	83
11. A Wonderful Book.....	77
12. Winning a Prize.....	76
13. Leaving a Note for Mother.....	75
14. My Favorite Song and Why I Like It.....	72
15. Caught in a Storm.....	67
16.5 Why We Give to the Community Fund.....	64
16.5 Monkey Business!.....	64
18. When I Was Very Young.....	63
19. Making a Snow Man.....	61
20. Waiting for the Mail.....	53
21. My Neighbors.....	51
22.5 The Value of Playgrounds.....	50
22.5 The President of the United States.....	50
24. How to Prevent Colds.....	33
25. Weather Forecasting.....	23

Construction of situations.-- When the topic assignments to be used in this study had been determined according to the results of the above-mentioned questionnaire, it became necessary to construct situation assignments which would

parallel these topics.

It was kept in mind while writing the situations that they must be within the real or the vicarious experience of the children; and that they must be situations which would elicit written response.

For the purpose of this study the topic assignment will be referred to as:

Topic I

Topic II

Topic III

Topic IV

Topic V

Topic VI

The situation assignments will be referred to as:

Situation I

Situation II

Situation III

Situation IV

Situation V

Situation VI

Following are the six topic assignments with their parallel situation assignments.

Topic I

What I Want to Be

Situation I

What do you plan to do when you grow up?

Suppose that a wealthy man is running a contest in your local newspaper. He is asking boys and girls from nine to fourteen years of age to send to the paper compositions telling what they want to be when they grow up, and how they came to make their choices.

For prizes he is offering scholarships to help the winners to train for their chosen careers.

The first prize will be a \$500 scholarship; the second, a \$300 scholarship; and the third, a \$200 scholarship.

Send your entry in now. The decision of the judges will be final.

Topic II

A Trip I'd Like to Take

Situation II

Imagine that a travel agency is running a contest for boys and girls. You are asked to write a composition, describing a trip you would like to take.

Be sure to tell where you would like to go, how you would like to travel, and some of the interesting things you would hope to see and do while you were away.

The agency will publish the three best entries in its travel folder and arrange for the winners to take, with all expenses paid, the trips about which they write.

Send your entry in now. The decision of the judges will be final.

Topic III

Fun at the Beach

Situation III

Make believe that you have just returned from a visit with your friend Mary and her family at their summer cottage in Old Orchard Beach, Maine.

You have had a wonderful time, swimming and playing on the beach. The amusements there reminded you of the ones at Revere Beach. Mary and her family did everything to make your stay a happy one. Whatever you wanted to do was the program for the day.

Write a letter to Mary, thanking her for the wonderful week you spent with her.

Topic IV

How to Earn Money

Situation IV

Your father has promised to pay your way to a camp in New Hampshire this summer. Your cousin Jimmy in Hamilton would like to go with you. His father is sorry to have to tell him that because of a strike in the factory where he works, he can't afford to send him to camp this year. If Jimmy goes to camp, he will have to earn money enough to

pay his own way.

You want very much for Jimmy to go with you. Write him a letter suggesting one or more ways in which he might earn the money to go to camp.

Topic V

What I Like about the _____ School

Situation V

Pretend that your mother has a sister in Winthrop who is sick and must go to a hospital for several months. She has a son, your Cousin John, who is just your age. The families decide that it will be best to have John stay with you in Lynn for the rest of the school year.

John agrees to the plan, but he likes his school in Winthrop and hates to leave it. He's afraid that he won't have such a good time at your school.

Try to cheer John up. Write him a letter, telling him all the reasons you can think of why you know that he will like the _____ School.

Topic VI

If I Were Rich

Situation VI

All over the country people are talking about the large fortune which Bob Miller, a young Texan boy, has just inherited. Newspaper reporters are interviewing Bob to find

out what he plans to do now that he is rich.

The sponsor of Station WXZY feels that his radio audience would like to hear what other boys and girls think they would do, if like Bob Miller, they suddenly became wealthy. He asks you to write to the station, telling what you would do, if you were Bob. One dollar will be paid for each entry read over the air.

The study conducted to present three findings:

- I. Which type of assignment produced the greatest number of words?
- II. Which type of assignment produced the greatest length of sentences?
- III. Which type of assignment produced the greatest number of ideas?

Population.-- The experiment was conducted in 1934.

Massachusetts on a total population of 100 children. The group included the first and second grade classes of 25 children each, totaling 50 children.

For statistical purposes, the two 25th grade classes were designated as A and B, and the two 2nd grade classes as C and D.

Time of writing assignment.-- The experiment began April 22, 1934 and went on for a period of six weeks with each child writing one composition a week.

CHAPTER III

CONDUCT OF THE EXPERIMENT

Purpose.-- The aim of this experiment was to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the topic assignment and the situation assignment in fifth and sixth grade composition.

The study endeavored to present three findings:

- I. Which type of assignment produced the greater number of words?
- II. Which type of assignment produced the greater word enrichment?
- III. Which type of assignment produced the greater number of ideas?

Population.-- The experiment was conducted in Lynn, Massachusetts on a total population of 121 children. The group included two fifth and two sixth grade classes, all heterogeneous in grouping.

For statistical treatment the two fifth grade classes were designated as A and B, and the two sixth grade classes as C and D.

Time of writing compositions.-- The experiment began March 24, 1947 and went on for a period of six weeks with each child writing one composition a week.

CHAPTER III

CONDUCT OF THE EXPERIMENT

Purpose.-- The aim of this experiment was to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the topic assignment and the situation assignment in fifth and sixth grade composition.

The study endeavored to present three findings:

- I. Which type of assignment produced the greater number of words?
- II. Which type of assignment produced the greater word enrichment?
- III. Which type of assignment produced the greater number of ideas?

Population.-- The experiment was conducted in Lynn, Massachusetts on a total population of 181 children. The group included two fifth and two sixth grade classes, all heterogeneous in grouping.

For statistical treatment the two fifth grade classes were designated as A and B, and the two sixth grade classes as C and D.

Time of writing composition.-- The experiment began March 28, 1947 and went on for a period of six weeks with each child writing one composition a week.

Design of the experiment.-- The rotation method of experimentation was used in this study. A differential study, involving critical ratios, was made of the results of the two types of assignments in composition.

Table II shows the particular technique of rotation used. It will be observed that each week all the pupils wrote on the same subject. Two classes were given the topic assignment and the other two classes, the situation assignment. Classes having a topic assignment one week were given a situation assignment the next week. This method of rotation was employed until each child had written six compositions, three from topic assignments and three from situation assignments.

Table II. Method of Rotation.

	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D
First Week	Topic I	Situation I	Topic I	Situation I
Second Week	Situation II	Topic II	Situation II	Topic II
Third Week	Topic III	Situation III	Topic III	Situation III
Fourth Week	Situation IV	Topic IV	Situation IV	Topic IV
Fifth Week	Topic V	Situation V	Topic V	Situation V
Sixth Week	Situation VI	Topic VI	Situation VI	Topic VI

All classes received the same set of instructions so as to keep the experiment as standardized as possible.

Following are the instructions to which each teacher adhered.

1. Give all assignments equal emphasis.
2. Write topics on the blackboard. Give each child a copy of the situation on which he is to write.
3. Read the assignment to the class.
4. Allow children to use dictionaries.
5. Offer no suggestions and make no corrections.
6. Do not tell the pupils how long their compositions should be.
7. Give each child ample time to finish his composition.

Scoring.-- There were three bases for measurement in this study.

1. Length
2. Word enrichment
3. Ideas

Scoring for length.-- In scoring for length each word was counted separately and as many times as it was used. Each word received a score of one point.

Scoring for word enrichment.-- In making this count all words not appearing on the Durrell Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary¹ were counted. This list contains 90 per cent

¹Donald D. Durrell, Improvement of Basic Reading Abilities (New York: World Book Company, 1940), pp. 345-350.

of the words ordinarily used in the written compositions of children in the intermediate grades. Each word counted received a score of one point.

The rules followed by Corson¹ were adhered to in this study:

1. Each word was counted only once for each pupil. For example, a child may have used "hunt" several times, yet it is counted as one word.
2. Varying forms of the same word were not counted. A child may have used "hunt, hunts, hunted, hunter," etc. Only one form of the word was counted.
3. Contractions of words appearing on the first three levels of the list were not counted.
4. Different meanings of the same words were counted separately. In the sentences, "We saw a dog show," and "It showed how dogs are trained," two different meanings are expressed, and the word counted as two.

A copy of the Durrell Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary may be found in the Appendix.

Scoring for ideas.-- In scoring for ideas each idea was counted and given one point of score.

As in the study made by Acomb,² the method of scoring used followed the plan of the "Reading and Recall" test in

¹Hazel Corson, "Individual Differences in the Extent and Level of the Vocabulary Used by Intermediate Grade Children," Unpublished Master's Thesis (Boston: Boston University School of Education, 1938), p. 20.

²Allan Acomb, "A Study of the Psychological Factors in Reading and Spelling," Unpublished Master's Thesis (Boston: Boston University School of Education, 1936), p. 40.

the ten-year level of the Stanford Binet Test, Form L.¹

A copy of one composition submitted in this study is presented below. Following the composition is a list of the ideas which were given a score of one point each.

Earning Money

There was an ad in the paper last week for a girl to take care of a baby girl. I applied and was accepted. I began work on Wednesday afternoon at 4:00 o'clock.

I took the little baby named Betty for a ride in her carriage. When I came back her mother asked me to stay until five o'clock.

She is a sweet baby, and it is fun to stay with her. I knit carriage covers and little sweaters for her. I go there every day.

Listed below are the ideas expressed in this composition.

1. There was an ad
2. in the paper
3. last week
4. for a girl
5. to take care of
6. a baby
7. girl.
8. I
9. applied

¹Lewis M. Terman and Maud A. Merrill, Meaning of Intelligence (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937), pp. 255-256.

10. and was accepted.
11. I began work
12. on Wednesday
13. afternoon
14. at 4:00 o'clock.
15. I took the little baby
16. named Betty
17. for a ride
18. in her carriage.
19. When I came back
20. her mother
21. asked me
22. to stay
23. until five o'clock.
24. She is a sweet baby
25. and it is fun
26. to stay with her.
27. I knit
28. carriage covers
29. and little sweaters
30. for her.
31. I go there
32. every day.

10. and was accepted.
11. I began work.
12. on Wednesday
13. afternoon
14. at 4:00 o'clock.
15. I took the little baby
16. named Betty
17. for a ride
18. in her carriage.
19. When I came back
20. her mother
21. asked me
22. to stay
23. until five o'clock.
24. She is a sweet baby
25. and it is fun
26. to stay with her.
27. I knit
28. certain covers
29. and little sweaters
30. for her.
31. I no there
32. every day.

The writer feels that this method of scoring ideas, though subjective, has value when the scoring is performed by an impartial scorer.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The aim of this study was to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the topic assignment and the situation assignment in fifth and sixth grade composition.

The data were analyzed in categories:

I. Which type of assignment--the topic or the situation--produced the greater number of words?

1. In the composition of all the children?

2. In the composition of the fifth grade children only?

3. In the composition of the sixth grade children only?

4. In the composition of the boys only?

5. In the composition of the girls only?

II. Which type of assignment--the topic or the situation--produced the greater number of words in the paragraph?

1. In the composition of all the children?

2. In the composition of the fifth grade children only?

3. In the composition of the sixth grade children only?

4. In the composition of the boys only?

5. In the composition of the girls only?

The writer feels that this method of scoring ideas, though subjective, has value when the scoring is performed by an impartial scorer.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The aim of this study was to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the topic assignment and the situation assignment in fifth and sixth grade composition.

The data were analyzed to determine:

- I. Which type of assignment--the topic or the situation--produced the greater number of words
 1. in the compositions of all the children?
 2. in the compositions of the fifth grade children only?
 3. in the compositions of the sixth grade children only?
 4. in the compositions of the boys only?
 5. in the compositions of the girls only?
- II. Which type of assignment--the topic or the situation--produced the greater number of words off the Durrell list
 1. in the compositions of all the children?
 2. in the compositions of the fifth grade children only?
 3. in the compositions of the sixth grade children only?
 4. in the compositions of the boys only?
 5. in the compositions of the girls only?

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The aim of this study was to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the topic assignment and the situation assignment in fifth and sixth grade composition.

The data were analyzed to determine:

I. Which type of assignment--the topic or the situation--

produced the greater number of words

1. in the compositions of all the children?

2. in the compositions of the fifth grade children only?

3. in the compositions of the sixth grade children only?

4. in the compositions of the boys only?

5. in the compositions of the girls only?

II. Which type of assignment--the topic or the situation--

produced the greater number of words off the formula?

Just

1. in the compositions of all the children?

2. in the compositions of the fifth grade children only?

3. in the compositions of the sixth grade children only?

4. in the compositions of the boys only?

5. in the compositions of the girls only?

III. Which type of assignment--the topic or the situation--produced the greater number of ideas

1. in the compositions of all the children?
2. in the compositions of the fifth grade children only?
3. in the compositions of the sixth grade children only?
4. in the compositions of the boys only?
5. in the compositions of the girls only?

In interpreting the critical ratios obtained for each of the aspects of this study, the writer was guided by Mills.¹

If a given difference between hypothetical and observed values would occur as a result of chance only one time out of one hundred, or less frequently, we may say that the difference is significant. This means that the results are not consistent with the hypothesis we have set up. If the discrepancy between theory and observation might occur more frequently than one time out of one hundred solely because of the play of chance, we may say the difference is not clearly significant. The results are not inconsistent with the hypothesis. The value of T (the difference between the hypothetical value and the observed mean in units of the standard error of the mean) corresponding to a probability of $1/100$ is 2.576. One hundredth part of the area under a normal curve lies at a distance from the mean, on the axis, of 2.576 standard deviations or more. Accordingly, tests of significance may be applied with direct reference to T , interpreted as a normal deviate (i.e., as a deviation from the mean of a normal distribution expressed in units of standard deviation). A value of T of 2.576 or more indicates a significant difference, while a value of less than 2.576 indicates that the results are not inconsistent with the hypothesis in question.

¹Frederick C. Mills, Statistical Methods, Revised (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938), p. 471.

III. Which type of assignment--the topic or the situation--

produced the greater number of ideas

1. in the compositions of all the children?

2. in the compositions of the fifth grade children only?

3. in the compositions of the sixth grade children only?

4. in the compositions of the boys only?

5. in the compositions of the girls only?

In interpreting the critical ratios obtained for each

of the aspects of this study, the writer was aided by

Wills.

If a given difference between hypothetical and observed values would occur as a result of chance only one time out of one hundred, or less frequently, we may say that the difference is significant. This means that the results are not consistent with the hypothesis we have set up. If the discrepancy between theory and observation should occur more frequently than one time out of one hundred solely because of the play of chance, we may say the difference is not clearly significant. The results are not inconsistent with the hypothesis. The value of T (the difference between the hypothetical value and the observed mean in units of the standard error of the mean) corresponding to a probability of 1/100 is 2.575. One hundredth part of the area under a normal curve lies at a distance from the mean, on the axis, of 2.575 standard deviations or more. Accordingly, tests of significance may be applied with direct reference to T , interpreted as a normal deviate (i.e., as a deviation from the mean of a normal distribution expressed in units of standard deviation). A value of T of 2.575 or more indicates a significant difference, while a value of less than 2.575 indicates that the results are not inconsistent with the hypothesis in question.

The tables which follow give critical ratios for each of the fifteen aspects listed at the beginning of this chapter.

Table III. Number of Words Written by All the Children for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	90.29	1.52	4.20	2.14	1.96
Situation....	86.09	1.51			

Table III shows a comparison of the mean number of words written by all the children for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of words written for topic assignments was 90.29 compared with a mean of 86.09 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of 4.20 words in favor of the topic assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was 1.52 compared with 1.51 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of 2.14.

The critical ratio of 1.96 was not statistically significant.

The tables which follow give critical ratios for each of the fifteen aspects listed at the beginning of this chapter.

Table III. Number of Words Written by All the Children for Topic vs. Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	90.29	1.38			
Situation....	88.09	1.51	4.80	2.14	1.98

Table III shows a comparison of the mean number of words written by all the children for topic and situation assignments. The mean number of words written for topic assignments was 90.29 compared with a mean of 88.09 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of 4.80 words in favor of the topic assignment. The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was 1.38 compared with 1.51 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of 2.14. The critical ratio of 1.98 was not statistically significant.

Table IV. Number of Words Written by Fifth Grade Children for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	92.74	2.48	10.57	3.26	3.24
Situation....	82.17	2.12			

Table IV shows a comparison of the mean number of words written by 55 fifth grade children for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of words written for topic assignments was 92.74 compared with a mean of 82.17 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of 10.57 words in favor of the topic assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was 2.48 compared with 2.12 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of 3.26.

The critical ratio of 3.24 was statistically significant.

Table IV. Number of Words Written by Fifth Grade Children
for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	U.R.
Topic.....	32.74	2.48	10.57	3.28	3.24
Situation....	32.17	2.12			

Table IV shows a comparison of the mean number of words written by 55 fifth grade children for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of words written for topic assignments was 32.74 compared with a mean of 32.17 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of 10.57 words in favor of the topic assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was 2.48 compared with 2.12 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of 3.28. The critical ratio of 3.24 was statistically significant.

Table V. Number of Words Written by Sixth Grade Children for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	88.26	2.00	1.12	2.86	.39
Situation....	89.38	2.05			

Table V shows a comparison of the mean number of words written by 66 sixth grade children for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of words written for topic assignments was 88.26 compared with a mean of 89.38 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of 1.12 words in favor of the situation assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was 2.00 compared with 2.05 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of 2.86.

The critical ratio of .39 was not statistically significant.

Table VI. Number of Words Written by Boys for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	86.79	2.18	2.59	3.05	.85
Situation....	84.20	2.14			

Table VI shows a comparison of the mean number of words written by sixty-four boys for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of words written for topic assignments was 86.79 compared with 84.20 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of 2.59 in favor of the topic assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was 2.18 compared with 2.14 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of 3.05.

The critical ratio of .85 was not statistically significant.

Table VII. Number of Words Written by the Girls for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	94.28	2.23	6.02	3.11	1.94
Situation....	88.26	2.17			

Table VII shows a comparison of the mean number of words written by fifty-seven girls for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of words written for topic assignments was 94.28 compared with 88.26 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of 6.02 words in favor of the topic assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was 2.23 compared with 2.17 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of 3.11.

The critical ratio of 1.94 was not statistically significant.

Table VIII. Number of Words off the Durrell Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary, Written by All Children for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	9.82	.28			
Situation....	10.51	.32	.69	.43	1.60

Table VII shows a comparison of the mean number of words off the Durrell Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary written by all the children for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of words off the list written for topic assignments was 9.82 compared with a mean of 10.51 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of .69 words in favor of the situation assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was .28 compared with .32 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of .43.

The critical ratio of 1.60 was not statistically significant.

Table IX. Number of Words off the Durrell Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary, Written by Fifth Grade Children for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	8.68	.37	.93	.52	1.79
Situation....	9.61	.36			

Table IX shows a comparison of the mean number of words off the Durrell Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary, written by 55 fifth grade children for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of words off the list written for topic assignments was 8.68 compared with 9.61 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of .93 words in favor of the situation assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was .37 compared with .36 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of .52.

The critical ratio of 1.79 was not statistically significant.

Table X. Number of Words off the Durrell Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary, Written by Sixth Grade Children for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	10.75	.42			
Situation....	11.26	.46	.51	.62	.82

Table X shows a comparison of the mean number of words off the Durrell Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary written by 66 sixth grade children for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of words off the list written for topic assignments was 10.75 compared with a mean of 11.26 for situation assignments. This shows a difference of .51 words in favor of the situation assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was .42 compared with .46 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of .62.

The critical ratio of .82 was not statistically significant.

Table X. Number of words off the Target Primary Remedial-
Reading Vocabulary, written by Sixth Grade Children
given for Topic vs Attention assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.E.
Topic.....	10.75	.42			
Attention....	11.25	.42	.51	.58	.82

Table X shows a comparison of the mean number of words
off the Target Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary written
by 66 sixth grade children for three topic and three atten-
tion assignments.

The mean number of words off the 112 written for topic
assignments was 10.75 compared with a mean of 11.25 for
attention assignments. This shows a difference of .51 words
in favor of the attention assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments
was .42 compared with .42 for attention assignments, making
a standard error of difference of .58.

The critical ratio of .82 was not statistically sig-
nificant.

Table XI. Number of Words off the Durrell Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary, Written by the Boys for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	9.61	.40	1.02	.59	1.73
Situation....	10.63	.44			

Table XI shows a comparison of the mean number of words off the Durrell Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary written by sixty-four boys for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of words off the list written for topic assignments was 9.61 compared with 10.63 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of 1.02 in favor of the situation assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was .40 compared with .44 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of .59.

The critical ratio of 1.73 was not statistically significant.

Table XI. Number of words of the Bureau Primary Reading-
Reading Vocabulary, written by the boys for topic
vs situation assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	9.61	.40	1.02	.39	1.73
Situation....	10.83	.44			

Table XI shows a comparison of the mean number of words
of the Bureau Primary Reading Vocabulary written
by sixty-four boys for three topic and three situation
assignments.

The mean number of words of the list written for topic
assignments was 9.61 compared with 10.83 for situation as-
signment. This showed a difference of 1.02 in favor of
the situation assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments
was .40 compared with .44 for situation assignments, making
a standard error of difference of .04.

The critical ratio of 1.73 was not statistically sig-
nificant.

Table XII. Number of Words off the Durrell Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary, Written by the Girls for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	10.06	.35	.30	.57	.53
Situation....	10.36	.45			

Table XII shows a comparison of the mean number of words off the Durrell Primary Remedial-Reading Vocabulary, written by fifty-seven girls for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of words off the list written for topic assignments was 10.06 compared with 10.36 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of .30 in favor of the situation assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was .35 compared with .45 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of .57.

The critical ratio of .53 was not statistically significant.

Table XIII. Number of Ideas Expressed by All Children for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	25.55	.46	.25	.66	.37
Situation....	25.30	.47			

Table XIII shows a comparison of the mean number of ideas expressed by all the children for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of ideas expressed for topic assignments was 25.55 compared with a mean of 25.30 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of .25 in favor of the topic assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was .46 compared with .47 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of .66.

The critical ratio of .37 was not statistically significant.

Table XIV. Number of Ideas Expressed by Fifth Grade Children for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	24.85	.67	2.35	.92	2.55
Situation....	22.50	.63			

Table XIV shows a comparison of the mean number of ideas expressed by 55 fifth grade children for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of ideas expressed for topic assignments was 24.85 compared with 22.50 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of 2.35 in favor of the topic assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was .67 compared with .63 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of .92.

The critical ratio of 2.55 was not statistically significant.

Table XV. Number of Ideas Expressed by Sixth Grade Children for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	26.10	.64	2.30	.95	2.42
Situation....	28.40	.70			

Table XV shows a comparison of the mean number of ideas expressed by 66 sixth grade children for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of ideas expressed for topic assignments was 26.10 compared with a mean of 28.40 for situation assignments.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was .64 compared with .70 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of .95.

The critical ratio of 2.42 was not statistically significant.

Table XVI. Number of Ideas Expressed by the Boys for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	24.05	.63	.90	.97	.93
Situation....	24.95	.74			

Table XVI shows a comparison of the mean number of ideas expressed by sixty-four boys for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of ideas expressed for topic assignments was 24.05 compared with 24.95 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of .90 in favor of the situation assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was .63 compared with .74 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of .97.

The critical ratio of .93 was not statistically significant.

Table XVII. Number of Ideas Expressed by the Girls for Topic vs Situation Assignments.

	Mean	S.E. Mean	Diff.	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic.....	27.20	.71	1.50	.96	1.56
Situation....	25.70	.65			

Table XVII shows a comparison of the number of ideas expressed by fifty-seven girls for three topic and three situation assignments.

The mean number of ideas expressed for topic assignments was 27.20 compared with 25.70 for situation assignments. This showed a difference of 1.50 in favor of the topic assignment.

The standard error of the mean for topic assignments was .71 compared with .65 for situation assignments, making a standard error of difference of .96.

The critical ratio of 1.56 was not statistically significant.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Purpose of study.-- The purpose of this study was to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the topic assignment and the situation assignment in fifth and sixth grade composition.

Three criteria were used to judge the two types of assignments.

- I. Which assignment produced the greater number of words?
- II. Which assignment produced the greater word enrichment?
- III. Which assignment produced the greater number of ideas?

Summary.-- The study was conducted in Lynn, Massachusetts on a total population of 121 pupils. The group included two fifth and two sixth grade classes, all of heterogeneous grouping.

Six topic assignments and six situation assignments were used in this study. The topic assignments were the six highest preferences made by the children from a list of

twenty-five topics covering a wide range of interests. Six situation assignments were written to parallel the six topics chosen.

The experiment lasted six weeks with each child writing one composition each week.

The rotation technique of experimentation was used. Each week all the children wrote on the same subject. Two classes were given the topic assignment and the other two classes, the situation assignment. Classes having a topic assignment one week were given a situation assignment the next week. This method of rotation was used until each child had written six compositions, three from topic assignments and three from situation assignments.

Limitations of the study.--

1. Only 121 pupils took part in the study.
2. No differentiation was made between the performance of the children of high mentality and the performance of the children of low mentality.

Conclusions

Conclusions.-- The data obtained from this study were analyzed statistically with the following conclusions:

1. The results indicate that in fifth and sixth grade composition neither the topic assignment nor the situation assignment has any important advantage over the other type of assignment in eliciting fluency, word enrichment, or ideas.
2. The topic assignment produced greater fluency in the compositions of all the children, the fifth grade children, the boys, and the girls. However, the difference was statistically significant only in grade five, where there was a critical ratio of 3.24.
3. The situation assignment produced greater fluency in the compositions of the sixth grade children only. The difference, however, was not of statistical significance.
4. The situation assignment produced greater word enrichment in all of the aspects analyzed, but the differences were not of statistical significance.
5. The topic assignment produced more ideas in the compositions of all the children, the fifth grade children, and the girls. The differences were not statistically significant.

6. The situation assignment produced more ideas in the compositions of the sixth grade children and the boys, but the differences were not of statistical significance.
7. The findings in grade six were consistent to the extent that there were slight differences favoring the situation assignment in all of the aspects analyzed: fluency, word enrichment, and number of ideas. These differences, however, were not statistically significant.

Suggestions for further research.--

1. Try the same experiment on a larger population of fifth and sixth graders.
2. Set up the same type of study for grades seven and eight.
3. Conduct the same type of experiment under the following conditions:
 - a. Let the children indicate their likes and dislikes for twenty-five or more situation assignments.
 - b. Write topic assignments to parallel their six highest choices in situation assignments.
4. Repeat the experiment to determine:
 - a. Which type of assignment produces the greater response among bright children?

6. The situation assignment produced more false in the compositions of the sixth grade children and the boys, but the differences were not of statistical significance.

7. The findings in grade six were consistent to the extent that there were slight differences favoring the situation assignment in all of the aspects analyzed: fluency, word enrichment, and number of ideas. These differences, however, were not statistically significant.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. Give the same experiment on a larger population of fifth and sixth graders.
2. Set up the same type of study for grades seven and eight.
3. Conduct the same type of experiment under different testing conditions.
4. Let the children indicate their likes and dislikes for twenty-five or more situation assignment.
5. Write topic sentences to parallel their situation choices in situation assignments.
6. Repeat the experiment to determine.
7. Which type of assignment produces the greatest response among bright children?

- b. Which type of assignment produces the greater response among average children?
 - c. Which type of assignment produces the greater response among slow children?
5. Set up an experiment to determine the relative effectiveness of contest situations and letter-writing situations.

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Below is a list of 25 topics for written assignments. Read each one carefully. Put an A in front of each one if you think you would like to write. Put a B in front of each topic if you think you would dislike to write.

- ___ 1. My Mother's Life
- ___ 2. My Father's Life
- ___ 3. My Grandfather's Life
- ___ 4. My Grandmother's Life
- ___ 5. My Uncle's Life
- ___ 6. My Aunt's Life
- ___ 7. My Sister's Life
- ___ 8. My Brother's Life
- ___ 9. My Friend's Life
- ___ 10. My Teacher's Life
- ___ 11. My Neighbor's Life
- ___ 12. My Pet's Life
- ___ 13. My Favorite Place
- ___ 14. My Favorite Food
- ___ 15. My Favorite Sport
- ___ 16. My Favorite Book
- ___ 17. My Favorite Song
- ___ 18. My Favorite Movie
- ___ 19. My Favorite Color
- ___ 20. My Favorite Animal
- ___ 21. My Favorite Plant
- ___ 22. My Favorite Season
- ___ 23. My Favorite Time of Day
- ___ 24. My Favorite Place to Visit
- ___ 25. My Favorite Hobby

APPENDIX

Below is a list of 25 topics for written compositions. Read each one carefully. Put an L in front of each one on which you think you would like to write. Put a D in front of each topic on which you think you would dislike to write.

- _____ 1. Why We Give to the Community Fund
- _____ 2. A Trip I'd Like to Take
- _____ 3. Winning a Prize
- _____ 4. It Pays to Be Honest
- _____ 5. Making a Snow Man
- _____ 6. When I Was Very Young
- _____ 7. My Neighbors
- _____ 8. Weather Forecasting
- _____ 9. What I Want to Be
- _____ 10. Caught in a Storm
- _____ 11. Animals Need Care
- _____ 12. Why Every Boy and Girl Should Learn to Swim
- _____ 13. The Value of Playgrounds
- _____ 14. The President of the United States
- _____ 15. If I Were Rich
- _____ 16. How to Prevent Colds
- _____ 17. Leaving a Note for Mother
- _____ 18. The Funniest Story I've Ever Heard
- _____ 19. Monkey Business!
- _____ 20. A Wonderful Book
- _____ 21. My Favorite Song and Why I Like It
- _____ 22. Fun at the Beach
- _____ 23. Waiting for the Mail
- _____ 24. How to Earn Money
- _____ 25. What I Like about the _____ School

Below is a list of 25 topics for written compositions. Read each one carefully. Put an L in front of each one on which you think you would like to write. Put a D in front of each topic on which you think you would dislike to write.

- _____ 1. The President of the United States
- _____ 2. If I Were Rich
- _____ 3. How to Prevent Colds
- _____ 4. Leaving a Note for Mother
- _____ 5. The Funniest Story I've Ever Heard
- _____ 6. Monkey Business!
- _____ 7. A Wonderful Book
- _____ 8. My Favorite Song and Why I Like It
- _____ 9. Fun at the Beach
- _____ 10. Waiting for the Mail
- _____ 11. How to Earn Money
- _____ 12. What I Like about the _____ School
- _____ 13. Why We Give to the Community Fund
- _____ 14. A Trip I'd Like to Take
- _____ 15. Winning a Prize
- _____ 16. It Pays to Be Honest
- _____ 17. Making a Snow Man
- _____ 18. When I Was Very Young
- _____ 19. My Neighbors
- _____ 20. Weather Forecasting
- _____ 21. What I Want to Be
- _____ 22. Caught in a Storm
- _____ 23. Animals Need Care
- _____ 24. Why Every Boy and Girl Should Learn to Swim
- _____ 25. The Value of Playgrounds

Below is a list of 25 topics for written composition. Read each one carefully. Put an L in front of each one on which you think you would like to write. Put a D in front of each topic on which you think you would dislike to write.

- _____ 1. A Wonderful Book
- _____ 2. My Favorite Song and Why I Like It
- _____ 3. Fun at the Beach
- _____ 4. Waiting for the Mail
- _____ 5. How to Earn Money
- _____ 6. What I Like about the _____ School
- _____ 7. Why We Give to the Community Fund
- _____ 8. A Trip I'd Like to Take
- _____ 9. Winning a Prize
- _____ 10. It Pays to Be Honest
- _____ 11. Making a Snow Man
- _____ 12. When I Was Very Young
- _____ 13. My Neighbors
- _____ 14. Weather Forecasting
- _____ 15. What I Want to Be
- _____ 16. Caught in a Storm
- _____ 17. Animals Need Care
- _____ 18. Why Every Boy and Girl Should Learn to Swim
- _____ 19. The Value of Playgrounds
- _____ 20. The President of the United States
- _____ 21. If I Were Rich
- _____ 22. How to Prevent Colds
- _____ 23. Leaving a Note for Mother
- _____ 24. The Funniest Story I've Ever Heard
- _____ 25. Monkey Business!

Below is a list of 25 topics for written compositions. Read each one carefully. Put an L in front of each one on which you think you would like to write. Put a D in front of each topic on which you think you would dislike to write.

- _____ 1. What I Want to Be
- _____ 2. Caught in a Storm
- _____ 3. Animals Need Care
- _____ 4. Why Every Boy and Girl Should Learn to Swim
- _____ 5. The Value of Playgrounds
- _____ 6. The President of the United States
- _____ 7. If I Were Rich
- _____ 8. How to Prevent Colds
- _____ 9. Leaving a Note for Mother
- _____ 10. The Funniest Story I've Ever Heard
- _____ 11. Monkey Business!
- _____ 12. A Wonderful Book
- _____ 13. My Favorite Song and Why I Like It
- _____ 14. Fun at the Beach
- _____ 15. Waiting for the Mail
- _____ 16. How to Earn Money
- _____ 17. What I Like about the _____ School
- _____ 18. Why We Give to the Community Fund
- _____ 19. A Trip I'd Like to Take
- _____ 20. Winning a Prize
- _____ 21. It Pays to Be Honest
- _____ 22. Making a Snow Man
- _____ 23. When I Was Very Young
- _____ 24. My Neighbors
- _____ 25. Weather Forecasting

DURRELL REMEDIAL-READING VOCABULARY FOR PRIMARY GRADES

Complete Alphabetical List of 754 Words

a	ask	book	change
about	asleep	born	child
able	at	both	children
above	ate	bother	choose
absent	away	bottom	church
across	awful	bought	city
act		box	class
add	baby	boy	clean
address	back	bread	clear
afraid	bad	break	climb
after	bag	bridge	close
afternoon	ball	bright	cloth
again	bank	bring	clothes
against	barn	broken	coat
ago	basket	brother	cold
ahead	be	brought	college
air	bear	brown	color
alike	beat	brush	come
alive	beautiful	build	company
all	because	burn	cook
almost	bed	business	cool
alone	been	busy	copy
along	before	but	cost
already	beg	button	could
also	began	buy	count
although	begin	by	country
always	behind		course
am	being	call	cover
among	believe	came	cross
amount	bell	can	cry
an	belong	candy	cup
and	best	can't	cut
angry	better	cap	
animal	between	car	dance
another	big	card	dark
answer	bill	care	day
any	bird	carry	dead
anybody	birthday	case	decide
anything	bit	cat	deep
apart	black	catch	did
apple	blow	caught	didn't
are	blue	cause	die
arm	board	cent	different
around	boat	certain	dig
as	body	chair	dinner

do
 doctor
 does
 doesn't
 dog
 dollar
 done
 don't
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 draw
 dress
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 drive
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 egg
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 end
 enough
 even
 evening
 ever
 every
 everything
 except
 excuse
 expect
 eye

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 fair
 fall
 family
 far
 farm
 fast
 fat
 father
 fed
 feed

feel
 feet
 fell
 felt
 few
 field
 fight
 fill
 find
 fine
 finger
 finish
 fire
 first
 fit
 five
 fix
 floor
 flower
 fly
 fold
 follow
 food
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 forget
 forgot
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 friend
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 front
 fruit
 full
 fun
 funny

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 kind
 knew
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lady
 land
 large
 last
 late
 laugh
 lay
 lead
 learn
 least
 leave
 left
 leg
 let
 letter
 lie
 life
 lift
 light

like	my	part	right
line	myself	party	ring
listen		pass	river
little	name	past	road
live	near	pay	rock
long	need	pencil	roll
look	never	people	room
lose	new	person	round
lost	news	pick	rubber
lot	next	picture	rule
love	nice	piece	run
low	night	place	
	nine	plan	sad
made	no	plant	safe
mail	nobody	play	said
make	noise	please	sale
man	nor	point	same
many	north	poor	sat
mark	nose	possible	save
matter	not	pound	saw
may	note	pour	say
me	nothing	practice	school
mean	now	present	sea
measure	number	pretty	seat
meat		price	second
meet	o'clock	print	see
men	of	pull	seem
middle	off	push	seen
might	office	put	sell
mile	often		send
milk	oh	quick	sent
mind	old	quiet	set
mine	on	quite	seven
minute	once		several
miss	one	rabbit	sew
mistake	only	rain	shake
mix	open	ran	shall
money	or	rather	she
month	order	reach	shine
more	other	read	ship
morning	ought	ready	shoe
most	our	real	shoot
mother	out	really	short
mountain	over	reason	shot
move	own	receive	should
Mr.		red	show
Mrs.	page	remember	shut
much	paid	rest	sick
music	paint	rich	side
must	paper	ride	sign

silk
since
sing
sir
sister
sit
six
size
skin
sleep
slip
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smoke
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something
sometime
son
song
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sorry
sound
south
speak
spend
spoil
spring
stamp
stand
star
start
state
station
stay
steal
step
still
stitch
stone
stop
store
story
straight
strange
street
strong

struck
study
such
suit
summer
sun
supper
suppose
sure
surprise
sweet
swim

table
take
talk
teach
teeth
tell
ten
than
thank
that
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third
this
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thousand
three
threw
through
throw
tie
till
time
tire
to
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trip
trouble
true
try
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without
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work
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would
wouldn't
wrap
write
written
wrong
wrote

yard
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yellow
yes
yesterday
yet
you
young
your
yourself

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